

a first portion;

a second portion in fluid connection with the first portion, the second portion being relatively more flexible than the first portion; and

a discrete support collar coupled to an outer perimeter of the second portion and abutting the first portion, the support collar being sized to prevent the formation of a stress riser at an intersection between the first and second portions to thereby render the intersection less susceptible to tearing in response to repeated flexing of the second portion.

*Sub C1* 25. (Amended) A method for forming a hose assembly for coupling a plurality of components in fluid connection, the method comprising the steps of:

forming a flexible duct structure from an elastomeric material;

*A2* forming first and second rigid duct structures, the first and second rigid duct structures being formed to be relatively more rigid than the flexible duct structure;

coupling the first rigid duct structure to a first end of the flexible duct structure;

coupling the second rigid duct structure to a second end of the flexible duct structure such that the flexible duct structure permits the first and second rigid duct structures to be moved relative to one another; and

bonding an attachment sleeve to an end of the second rigid duct structure opposite the flexible duct structure.

26. (Amended) The method of Claim 25, wherein the attachment sleeve is made from elastomeric material.